

A<sup>2</sup>

18. (Amended) A process for improving membrane performance of a microporous hydrophilic hollow fiber membrane comprising the step:

- (h) subjecting the hydrophilic microporous hollow fiber membrane obtained by the process of claim 1 to hot water treatment in a hot water bath at a temperature of 50° C to 100° C while relaxing tension on the fiber
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A<sup>3</sup>

21. (Amended) The process of claim 17 wherein, in the heat treating step (g) or (h), tension on the fiber is decreased to as close to zero as possible by using two pulleys and allowing the fiber to sag between these pulleys.

22. (Amended) The process of claim 17 wherein, in the heat treating step (g) or (h), the hot water treatment temperature is not less than 80°C.

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A<sup>4</sup>

24. (Amended) The hollow fiber membrane product of the process of claim 17.

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